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CIVIC SERMONS

TO THE *87437*

PEOPLE

By M. A. L. Davis

NUMBER II.

From mutual Wants springs mutual Happiness.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, NO. 72, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCH-YARD.

1792.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

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From mutual Wants springs mutual Happiness.

WHY are some men set over other men to rule and govern them?

This is a question we promised to examine, but it will be necessary, in the first place, to enquire of what *use* Government is, for nothing that is useless can be worth supporting at all; but if we succeed in finding out its uses, we shall easily com-

prehend every thing else relating to its establishment. And thus we shall set Government upon a broad and firm foundation, a foundation which no man would even wish to undermine, for no one desires to destroy that which is a benefit to him. You have probably read the story of the Old Man with the bundle of Arrows, and you know that singly we are all of us weak, but collectively strong. You know too that one man cannot make all the things he wants. One of you can plough the land; another graft and prune trees; another weave cloth; another shape and fashion the tools by which these things are done. It is therefore very desirable that men should associate and live together. It is likewise pleasant, and agreeable to the nature of Man, who loves society, to be thus associated. You must be convinced of this by the pleasure you take in forming

forming yourselves into little clubs, and knots of neighbourhood. A State is a more numerous club; a wider neighbourhood; an association including all lesser associations: but as it is difficult at once for the understanding to embrace an object of such magnitude, the greater will be better comprehended by beginning with the less. If your child wants to know what a State is, take him between your knees and say to him—"My child! when you were very little, our small cottage, and its spot of garden-ground, was all that you were acquainted with of the wide world. Your mother nourished you at her breast, I carried you in my arms; your brothers and sisters played with and caressed you: all people besides were strangers to you; so far from wishing to see them, you shrunk and hung back when they approached. Thus we guarded

the feeble beginnings of your life, as we guard a taper that is just lit; spreading the hands anxiously round it to shelter it from wind, and keeping it still, till the flame has gathered strength. This first society is called a Family. It is the root of every other society. It is the beginning of order, and kind affections, and mutual helpfulness and provident regulations. If this spring be pure, what proceeds from it will be pure: if it be polluted, the broader waters will be discoloured. *My child, love your family.* Its strength is your strength, its interests are your interests; one stream of life flows through every member of it. You owe much to your parents; my child, pay it to your children; for this is the wise appointment and beautiful contrivance of God, that so man might never, at any moment of his existence, find himself single,

single, unconnected and free from obligation; that so the relation of families might not be broken off, but might be continued through all generations in a lengthening and perpetual chain. But, my child, you are now grown older; your walks are extended to all the cluster of houses amongst which we live: you know the inhabitants; every one of them takes you by the hand, and bids you good-morrow as you pass. You know every copse and field, and pasture belonging to them; for you have been with the old men of the parish when they went to trace out and mark the bounds of it. This then is the next Society; the members of it are townsmen; they know each other, they care for each other; the rich help the poor, the poor work for the rich; they are more united than strangers. Now, my child, if you travel on, you come to

other towns, and fields and villages, and others still beyond them far, and further than you can see, East and West, and North and South, reaching on every side to the great Ocean, and all these together make up that large society called a *State*; so large is it, that you must stretch your imagination to conceive properly of its extent; it contains thousands and thousands of families whom you never have seen, nor probably ever will see; yet of all this you are a part, and joined to it in a most intimate and binding connection, like a limb to the body, or a single shoot to a large tree. These are all governed by the same rules; they speak the same language; they make war or peace together. *My child, love your Country!* it contains all you love; all lesser societies, of friends families and townsmen, are included in this vast, this comprehensive

com-

community."—In this manner, my friends, instruct your children, and make these important terms *familiar in their mouths as household names.*

If it be asked for what *reasons* men associate in this large connection, consider within yourselves for what reasons you associate in smaller societies. Consider what services you would wish from your neighbours, and what advantages you would expect from agreeing to live together, if you were to belong to no other community than that of the little township where you were about to settle yourselves.—You would wish, in the first place, that no one might hurt or do any injury to his neighbour. You would not have the strong abuse the weak. You would wish that a woman or a young child, should cross the green, or go to the
neigh-

neighbouring market, with as much safety as the stoutest man amongst you. You like to sleep in your beds, without being disturbed by ruffians; and you would think it a sad state of things if, when you go out in the fields to work, you were obliged to keep watch, and to spy anxiously into every wood and bye-lane, lest troops of robbers should fall upon you, and put you to death, or carry you into slavery. You wish, therefore, in the first place, *security to your persons*. You further wish, that when you have ploughed a field, or laid down a meadow for hay, your idle neighbour may not be permitted to reap the corn you have sown; or to turn in his cattle to trample down your grafs. You chuse to enjoy the fruits of your industry. You like to say, *this is mine*; when you have wrought any thing by your skill, or produced it from the earth

earth by your labour, or saved it by your
 œconomy; and you feel that without this
 encouragement you would not have suffi-
 cient motive for your exertions. You
 wish therefore the *security of property*.
 You wish further to have some general
 rules, known and agreed to by all, by
 which every one may conduct himself in
 the intercourses of life: you wish regula-
 tions for your fairs and markets, established
 weights and measures, and appointed days
 for particular business. You wish then
Laws, and a Police. You wish for some
 method of determining disputes which
 may arise; and of bringing to reason any
 refractory member of the society. You
 wish then a *Judicature*. You would be
 willing, especially those of you who are
 in easy circumstances, to spare something
 out of the produce of your shop, or your
 farm, for a common purse, in order to
 build

build a church, to make a road, to endow a school, to erect a market-crofs, to sink a well, or any the like useful works ; or even to make a bowling-green, or plant a walk of trees, where you may affemble with your families, and amufe yourselves when the labour of the day is over. You wish then *a revenue*. Further, perceiving that these excellent regulations you had made would not execute themselves, and that what is every one's business is no one's business, you would appoint some one or more persons amongst you whose province it should be to see that all these rules were observed, and your money laid out with faithfulness and judgment. As these persons could not well look after your business and their own too, you would be willing to appoint them a salary, which might make them amends for their time and trouble spent upon your affairs ;
you

you would likewise contrive that by appointing men to attend them when their office required it, they should always have power enough to make your rules be observed, in spite of all the resistance of ill-disposed and licentious people. You wish then *ruling powers, and an executive force*.—And thus you would have formed, almost without knowing it, that institution called *Government*: you would have traced in miniature the same plan which, with a larger outline, embraces the interests of States and Empires. It will have been suggested to you, as every other invention of man has been suggested to him, by his wants; and therefore it is that you will be at no loss to know its uses. Men suffer from the cold, and they contrive cloathing; they require shelter, and they construct houses; they have need of society, and they form Governments. There is nothing of mystery in this,

this, nothing that requires to be wrapt up in strange and unintelligible terms; the steps are plain and easy; the benefits are felt by all, and therefore it may be comprehended by all.

It has been asserted by some, that if men all were virtuous, there would be no occasion for Government; this, however, is far from being true. If all men were virtuous, we should indeed want no prisons, no terrible executions, no armed soldiers, but we should still want Government, because we should want society. Government is useful for three things. First, for protection: every man is protected with the force of every man; no force can attack the subject of the laws so great as that which defends him; even the man who rises to injure him is made at the same time, by the compelling force of Government, to contribute

tribute his share towards his defence. Secondly, for managing those affairs which Societies have in common ; when affairs are too big for any private undertaking, they are managed by the Society. By Government the whole strength of the community is made to act together, like a giant beam of some vast machine which plays with the complicated force of a thousand movements, and executes at once what a number of single arms would attempt in vain. Thirdly, Government is useful for regulating many things which in themselves are indifferent, but which, in order to prevent disputes, it is necessary to determine by some fixed and precise rule. In some cases, the law tells you what is right, and what is wrong ; but in some it *makes* the right and wrong. I will try to explain this. Reason tells us, that every man should enjoy the fruit
of

his own industry; but if a tenant finds in his field a copper mine, or a coal-pit, reason will not tell him whether it should belong to himself, or to his landlord. Reason will not tell him whether the fish in the river ought to be in common, or to belong to the occupier of the ground on its banks: reason will say that his property should be secured to him during his life, but reason will not say in what proportions it shall be divided after his death amongst his family; if indeed it will secure its perpetual continuance there. Yet these are circumstances too important to be left to the turbulent decisions of the moment; they are therefore made the object of law, and by this means a number of cases are determined in a quiet and regular manner, which, without such an authority to appeal to, would occasion continual animosity and contention, *because*

no clear right could exist on either side. —The larger and more flourishing any Society is, the more occasion it has for Government, because it has more affairs to manage in common, and more cases to be determined by particular rules. Along the vast plains of the middle of Asia rove innumerable tribes of Shepherds, leading their flocks from pasture to pasture, and subsisting upon their milk and flesh. These require very little of Government, for they have few common affairs to manage; when their tents are struck, their towns are moved, and their whole community unfixed. Few disputes of property can arise amongst them, beyond the right to a well of purer water, or the liberty of pitching their canvass dwellings in a meadow ground of richer pasture. They have no public works, no extensive

commerce, no navigation ; Government holds them with a loose and slight band of connection ; few of their actions are restrained. The division of tribes, in which a kind of family government is exercised, answers to them all the ends of a more complicated scheme of legislation. But it is not so in such a community as ours. We want much more of Society ; and therefore Government extends itself to many of our most common and indifferent actions. We want security for various kinds of property, of the most delicate and complex nature : we want provision for our teachers ; we want provision for our poor, and instruction for them ; we want armies and fleets for our defence. You have seen a ship, and you know how very little way one day's work of any of you would go towards completing

pleating it : we want many ships ; we want intercourse with foreign nations. We want some things for the pomp and decent splendor which becomes a great and rich people ; and all these affairs must be managed and directed by the public act and consent.—We require much of Government, and therefore it lays us under many restraints ; restraints as uneasy and difficult to bear, to one not accustomed to our state of society, as the fashion of our cloaths would be to the half-naked Indian, that bounds along without incumbrance amongst his native plains. We bear these restraints, because we think the advantages make it worth while ; there is no other reason.—Man, feeble and defenceless in thyself, rejoice that thou art joined to a community ! Individuals, rejoice that you are gathered

into a public ! Its strength becomes your strength, its riches your riches ; all its powers of defence to the last man would be drawn out to shield one of your little infants from violence or oppression. If a single man were to attack one of you who is stout, he could perhaps defend himself ; but he could not resist a band of armed robbers. In countries where there is no regular Government, there are many such, who infest the roads, fall upon and massacre the peaceable inhabitants, burn the houses, and carry away women and children into cruel slavery ; the law protects you against such ; the law is strong, because you are weak ; the law is armed, to defend you who are naked and unarmed. Citizens, expand your minds to take in these ideas ! Let your Country occupy a large space in your minds !

minds ! Love your Country ; not merely because you first drew breath in it, and because its fields, and woods, and rivers are endeared by early pleasures, and tender recollections ; though this too is agreeable to our nature, and a source of fond and exquisite delight ; but because it includes every other object of love, because it unites all separate energies into one energy, all separate wills into one will ; and having united and declared them, calls it Law.

—Reverence yourselves, for though but a small part, still you are a part of your Country. In yourselves you are weak, but in your Country you are strong ; in yourselves you are obscure, but in your Country you are celebrated ; in yourselves you are unlearned, but in your Country you possess all science and all art ; in yourselves you are defenceless, but in your

Country

Country you are invincible; in yourselves you are perishable, but in your Country you prolong an honourable existence from age to age. Its splendors are your splendors, its triumphs are your triumphs; every active citizen has a right to say, "*We* did this," when any honourable action is recorded of his Country. Love then this Country; unite its idea with that of your domestic comforts, of your industrious exertions, of your solemn prayers; be ready for any sacrifice it may require of you; and remember that as each of you, however inconsiderable, is benefited by your Country; so your Country, however extensive, is benefited by every one of the least of you, provided he sincerely exerts himself for that purpose.

Having

Having thus considered the uses of Government, you are prepared to see every thing belonging to it from its true centre and proper point of view; and will be able to judge what is misshapen, monstrous, and out of proportion, and what is well contrived, beautiful, and harmonious. Government is a machine constructed for a certain purpose. If any one were to shew you a machine with a number of wheels, springs and movements, and was to ask you to judge of its construction, you would immediately enquire for what purpose it was intended; for without such information you might see indeed that there was a great deal of mechanism employed about it, but whether well or ill contrived you would not be able to tell; for the proportion of every work depends on the effect to be produced
by

by it: a mill-wheel has not the same proportion with a cart-wheel; nor a common house the same proportions with a Church, because their *ends* are different. Never lose sight, therefore, of this truth, that *Government is an invention of man, for the service of men*: carry this idea along with you, and apply it, as the Carpenter does his rule and square, not only to the fairer and more stately apartments, but to every recess and abutment and hang-to of the State. I do not say that no difficulties will remain, for Government is too noble an art not to have its difficulties; but proportionally, few will remain. All Politicians would be nearly of a mind, if they were once agreed about the end they are to have in view: but the fact is, that in many States, I might say most, Government is an invention for the
 advantage

advantage of a *few men*, or perhaps of *one man*, and consequently for the oppression and degradation of the rest. I suppose you can be at no loss to determine which of these ends is the most desirable. You need not consider long to be convinced, that if happiness be good, the more of it there is in the world the better; and that it is a nobler plan which contrives the happiness of all, than that which contrives the happiness only of a part. If then you agree with me in this opinion, we will lay aside all the other plans of Government as not to our purpose. They may be very well contrived and proportioned to answer the end they are intended for, but it is not our end. We do not think the happiness of a few men a sufficient object; we want the happiness of all; for this plain reason, that all have

an equal desire to be happy, and an equal right to be so.

It would save a great deal of unnecessary trouble, if those who pretend to explain the wheels of any particular Government, would tell you at once which of these purposes it is intended for, for want of which they cannot make the several parts answer to their descriptions, and are as strangely puzzled as a man would be who should endeavour to explain to you a pump, making you believe all the while it was a machine to tell the hour of the day; and then they find themselves obliged to say, that the machine is made with such exquisite skill, it is too difficult for any but workmen to understand; whereas, if they would fairly say, This Government is not intended for the advantage of all,
but

but for the advantage of some men, or bodies of men, it might appear to be very ingeniously contrived for *that* purpose, and might be comprehended with ease. Governments are therefore of three sorts; those intended for the advantage of one man, those intended for the advantage of a few men, and those intended for the advantage of all men; of all which we shall speak in their turns, and likewise of chusing Governors.

Farewell.

of ruling Governors.

